



Contact

- a publication for Alberta family caregivers

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Caregivers in Alberta Workplaces

Like dominoes in a row, balancing work and caregiving can be a very difficult balancing act. Sitting at my desk, researching information for my sick mom, my employer and I both lost out. Me, because I felt guilty about using work time to benefit my family; my employer because my work efforts were reduced and costing the company money. It is a very big reality – caregiving costs the economy.

A 1999 Health Canada report estimates that caregiving employees cost Canadian employers at least \$2.7 billion a year in absenteeism, and the health care system about \$425.8 million.

Although the male caregiver population is growing, over 75% of caregivers are women. Many belong to the growing "sandwich generation," caring for young families at the same time as they care for elderly parents.

Here are a few helpful hints to assist in that balance:

1. **Don't keep it a secret.**
Let your boss or HR manager know of your dilemma and needs around caring for aging relatives.

2. **Listen up.**
There are many family caregivers at work who face similar challenges. Develop your own caring support group at work. Believe me, when walking the halls at work, (discreetly) paying attention to a few phone conversations will surprise you how many co-workers are facing the same issues.

3. **Build that support group.**
Meet up during lunch hour (if you're not running an errand for your loved one) and ask for advice or referrals... family caregivers usually have a notebook full of valuable phone numbers and service referrals. Support is needed, so ASK FOR HELP! You are not alone.

Produced by:
Alberta Caregivers
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ASK FOR HELP
You are not alone

Lunch and Learn

presentations to support caregiving employees are of great benefit to workplace morale.

Call us for more details

www.albertacaregiversassociation.org
caregiver@albertacaregiversassociation.org

Adapted from:
www.dlife.com/dLife/do/ShowContent/daily_living/bayer/caregiver_issues_and_workplace.htm

Communicating Well

“But, that’s not what I meant!” “You’re not listening to me!” Communication difficulties can create major family rifts and misunderstandings. Understanding our personal talking style and developing ways to avoid miscommunication will greatly ease stress for all involved in caregiving.

Communication is a process of sending and receiving messages. We all do it – have been all our lives. So why is understanding in our communications so hard sometimes? In the role of caregiver/care receiver, “intergenerational” communications often clash, causing frustration and hurt.

One of the biggest factors in communicating is “listening.” Plain old paying attention and actively listening will increase comprehension. If you are speaking with someone who is preoccupied, it is unlikely you will be heard. Learning tools for better communication is a learned skill that will benefit the health of all caregivers. The ACGA teaches communication skills to help caregivers guard their own mental and physical well-being.



Who Cares? Many, Many Children Do!

A 2005 national U.S. study reports there are greater than 1.4 million children (ages 8-18) caregiving in that country. A study in Australia found the percentage to be even higher. In Canada, no study has yet been completed, but we are confident the issue is just as startling here.

The range of chores completed includes; meal preparation, housekeeping, personal care, medication, even transportation...in short, all those tasks which adult caregivers perform. These caregivers attend relatives with ailments ranging from Alzheimer’s to MS to HIV/AIDS.

A big problem is the impact on schooling. More than half said home duties outweighed homework worries. 41% admitted missing homework assignments. On the other hand, 87% of these kids felt their work at home was fair. 72% reported doing many things on their own that peers could not.

Another side of the problem is the impact on children in sandwich caregiving families...we’ll look at that next time.

Earle Waugh, Education Consultant

<http://www.caregiving.org/data/youngcaregivers.pdf>

Family Caregiving Week – “Here we grow!”

This year, Family Caregiving Week (February 16 – 20) will be even more special for Edmonton area caregivers. The ACGA recently was awarded a grant from Family & Community Social Services (FCSS, administered by the City of Edmonton) to hire a “Caregiver Advisor” – a professional who works for you, the caregiver. Not getting the help you need from the health system? Call your Advisor. Wondering about what you can do to plan ahead? Call your Advisor. Having difficulty finding a service because you are new to Alberta? Call your Advisor.

We hope to finalize hiring for this long-awaited position before the middle of February. This is the first caregiver service of its kind in Canada.

Also, the ACGA and ElderCare Edmonton (provider of adult day support programs) have teamed up to provide integrated services for caregivers. In addition to the many group-based education, support, and information programs the ACGA offers, ElderCare’s Caregiver Support Manager will provide one-to-one, individualized support and counseling (much like the Caregiver Advisor concept). Access to one service will connect you to others seamlessly. Once again, this is a unique partnership proudly supported by FCSS.

Call our office to find out more about these exciting new developments.

Charitable Donation Update

Albertans are already some of the most giving and generous people anywhere, and as an organization that relies on that vibrant giving spirit to carry out our important work, the Alberta Caregivers Association wants to be sure you know about a new program that could make it even more worthwhile to support your favourite non-profit or charitable organization.

If you make a donation to a Canada Revenue Agency-registered charity, you will receive a non-refundable charitable tax credit when you complete your annual income tax return. When the provincial and federal charitable tax credits are combined, Albertans now receive a 50-cent non-refundable tax credit for every dollar donated over \$200.

For example, if you donate a total of \$500 to four or five charities over the year, you will receive a combined federal and provincial charitable tax credit of \$200. This means that the donations would cost you about \$300, which is the equivalent of donating 82 cents a day, or about the cost of buying a newspaper. As a result of the enhanced tax credit, you may consider donating more to your favourite charities. More support from you also means there is a greater opportunity for the ACGA to obtain a provincial grant to support our work in the province. The donation grant component of the Community Spirit Program allows our organization to apply for a grant based on the amount of money donated by individuals over a 12-month period. The more funds we raise, the better chance we have of receiving a grant to support our operations and the delivery of programs and services. Your donation counts! Through your support you are helping our community become stronger and more vibrant. For more information, please call us.

Let's Talk About... a difficult loved one

If your caregiving journey includes caring for a difficult loved one, the journey is different and more stressful than caring for someone who is compliant and grateful for care. The personality may be changed because of disease, injury, surgery, stroke, or medications.

As a caregiver, you know that this is not the person you once knew. A psychologist once said, "Grieve for the loss because the person you knew is no longer there". And so we caregivers grieve and grieve and grieve while the caregiving goes on relentlessly. The demands on us can be unreasonable; there are outbursts of anger, refusal to follow treatment, insistence on unsafe actions, defiance of suggestions, and the person may become emotionally and/or verbally abusive.

Family members may not be aware of these behaviors as they may only be displayed to one person. It can be very difficult to share this situation with others because speaking unkindly of an ill person is not acceptable. And yet the grieving process includes anger of our own. Every time the loved one loses an ability, we suffer their loss with them while our responsibility increases.

If you are in this situation, you definitely need to know that you are not alone. Some of us are on a similar path of caregiving and it is the most difficult. Talk to us at ACGA. You may not be able to change the situation at this time, but there are things that you can do and there are things that can help you. Know your rights as a caregiver. Know that we are here for you.

by Pat Zwartjes, Caregiver & ACGA Board Member



A tip of the "heart" to caregivers this Valentine's Day. Surrounded in legend, all the tales revolve around a noble third century Roman named Valentine. History characterizes St. Valentine as a sympathetic, heroic and compassionate figure. Sounds like a caregiver to me.

News Canada

What a Good Idea!



When organizing supplies, gather several shallow boxes—one for medicines, another for bathing supplies and a third for catheter or other supplies. This will save invaluable steps. Also, when visitors come, as they do, the house will be less cluttered because the boxes may be placed in a corner or under the bed.

Jean Pruett, Camden, SC

ACGA Course Offerings

NETWORK Program - an unstructured program for caregivers to meet together to spend some time with others on similar journey. Conversations range through stories, information and community supports. Preregistration is not required.

- *Fulton Place School 10310 – 56 Street
2nd and 4th Tuesday mornings of each month 10:00-11:30 am*
- *Southgate Sears Café (downstairs) 111 Street – 51 Avenue
1st Wednesday morning of each month 10:00 – 11:30 am*
- *ABC Country Restaurant 4485 Gateway Blvd. (Greenwood Inn)
4th Saturday of each month 8:30 am or when you can get there*
- *Northgate Lions Seniors Centre 7524 – 139 Avenue (Dates and times to be decided. Please call Karen for more information 780-453-5088)*

COMPASS for the Caregiver - navigating the emotional journey of caregiving. The program was recently completed for Edmonton Public Library staff. Comments from past program attendees include: *"I feel much more capable of handling the unexpected."*

Offered At:

- Edmonton Seniors Centre 11111 – Jasper Avenue (Spring 2009)
- Central Lions Seniors Centre 11113 – 113 Street Mondays 1:30-3:30
- SouthEast Edmonton Seniors Association 9350 – 82 Street (Spring 2009)

Community Caregiver Workshops – practical caregiving information on finance, housing, transportation, legal and more. Transport Canada has made this valuable program available for their staff. Lunch and learns are a great way to support caregivers in the workplace. Offered at:

- Edmonton Seniors Centre 11111 – Jasper Avenue
Monday & Wednesday beginning February 23 1:30-3:30 pm
- SouthEast Edmonton Seniors Association 9350 – 82 Street NW
Wednesdays beginning February 25 1:30 – 3:30pm
- Central Lions Seniors Centre 11113 – 113 Street (Spring 2009)
- Trinity Baptist Church 22550 Twp.Rd. 530, Sherwood Park (Spring 2009)

Call Karen for further details on any of the above

1-877-453-5088

karen@albertacaregiversassociation.org

At a recent COMPASS facilitator training, Sharlene Wyness shared the following poem. Sharlene has been a caregiver for a long time; at home while she was a young girl and also for her daughter Sheree, 31, who has cerebral palsy.

"I wrote this poem after an incident that took place when Sheree was about 3 years old. My husband was on shift work, so often when he worked afternoons, I would walk over to the shopping centre with Sheree to have supper in the restaurant. In order to feed Sheree, I would hold her on my lap. One time when we were eating, a couple of obviously pregnant women were sitting at the next table discussing very loudly about how terrible it was that a child that age should be sitting on her mother's knee to be fed like a baby. Now I'm not one to respond to someone in public, but by the time I reached home I was feeling angry and very upset at the rudeness of the ladies in question. I wondered how they would feel if something happened during their respective pregnancies and their babies were to have some type of disability. Since I could not go back and speak to them, I sat down and wrote this poem with the hope that whoever reads it would perhaps rethink their attitude toward people with handicaps."

The Handicap is Mine

If I look upon your twisted hands, the braces on your feet
If I hear the funny sounds you make, when you try to speak
If I watch you as you try to walk, with wobbling, weaving gait
 And see others walk away, for they cannot wait
If I look upon your outer shell, and imperfections there I find
 And turn and go upon my way,
 The handicap is mine!

If I do not see beyond the shell, nor look into your eyes,
To see the flame of living there, bright and strong, alive!
 If I do not see the person, who in that body dwells
Who thinks and dreams and feels and hopes, and in whose heart love swells
 An inner person much like me, if this I do not find
 But turn and go upon my way,
 The handicap is mine!

Sharlene Wyness

Supporting the Family Caregiver – Offer Help

Some caregivers put on a brave face and won't ask for help. Others don't have the time or energy to tell you how you can help them. By offering concrete and specific help and being prepared to follow through with your offer, you can support the caregiver in their daily tasks. Some ways in which you can be pro-active about offering help include:

- ✚ Check with the caregiver before doing things to make sure it's OK.
- ✚ Offer to take the caregiver with you for grocery shopping or errands, or offer to do this for them.
- ✚ Help with household task, do the laundry or the dishes, make the beds.
- ✚ Assist the caregiver in exploring community resources or even attending a support meeting with them.
- ✚ Act, don't react: if the grass needs mowing, do it. Same with snow shoveling.
- ✚ Prepare meals that can go in the freezer or bake muffins and cookies.
- ✚ Only offer help if you can do it (don't offer to fix the shower if you don't know how)
- ✚ Let the caregiver know you are sending positive energy their way and that you are thinking of them.
- ✚ Give information, but not advice.
- ✚ Call before you go over to make sure it is OK to visit. The time may not be appropriate and too many people can be overwhelming for both the caregiver and the care receiver.
- ✚ Maintain your friendships and connections with them.

Be flexible with how you offer support.

From: University of Victoria, Centre on Aging



Canada's NEW Registered Disability Savings Plan

On December 1st, 2008 the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) officially became a national financial savings mechanism. Canada is the first country in the world to have a RDSP. The RDSP presents a way of providing for future financial security of loved ones with disabilities.

Anyone, family and friends, can contribute to someone's RDSP. Any individual that is eligible for the *Disability Tax Credit* may establish an RDSP. Contributions are matched by the federal government through generous Canada Disability Savings Grants. For people who have limited financial means, the Canada Disability Savings Bond will be available even without contributions.

As a long-term savings plan, the Registered Disability Savings Plan has greater benefits for people who are under 50. For those over 50, there are still incentives to open a plan. Although you will not be able to benefit from the Government Grant and Bond, there is still the opportunity to contribute until the age of 60, save tax-free, and have unrestricted withdrawals that will not impact your provincial Disability Benefits or federal Guaranteed Income Supplement once you turn 65.

Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty has announced that any contributions made by March 2, 2009 will be considered 2008 contributions, and will be matched by 2008 Grants.

Currently, Bank of Montreal (BMO Financial Group) is the financial institution that has Federal Government approval to issue the plan to Canadians. (1-800-665-7700) A RDSP is still an investment so treating it like your other investments makes common sense.

For family caregivers, the RDSP could be a strong financial mechanism. As with any program, it does have its limitations, but is well worth checking into as another avenue of support for those who care.

www.rdsp.com
